REIDIA SINGAMPATTIANA SEBASTINE ET HENRY (EUPHORBIACEAE) — A RARE AND LITTLE KNOWN TAXON FROM WESTERN GHATS

This communication reports on the rediscovery of the rare, endemic taxon *Reidia singampattiana* Sebastine et Henry, about three decades after its type collection. In one of our frequent visits to Kalakad Reserve Forest, Western Ghats, we encountered the occurrence of this taxon. This species was described by Sebastine and Henry (1960) from Kakkachi area, located in the Kalakad sanctuary.

The striking features are its peculiar habit and habitat. The plant grows along the banks of rivers in dense, humid evergreen forest at an altitude of 1,310 m. It exhibits a wide variation in habit from an undershrub to a small tree up to 4 m high. Bark is greyish, twigs are quadrangular and woody. Leaves are small, entire, elliptic, equilateral (but oblique in flowering twigs), aromatic, pellucid punctate and shortly petioled. The tree displays a distinct top canopy of pale green leaves and a lower canopy of deep green, coriaceous leaves. Flower buds are small and pale green.

Only a few plants were located in Kalakad Reserve Forest, on the banks of the river Pachayar, way to Naterikal, 1,310 m. The associated plants in the habitat include *Lycianthes laevis* (Dunal) Bitter, *Memecylon subcordatum* Congn., *Polyscias acuminata* Seem and *Symplocos monantha* Wt.

Needless to say, the endemic taxon *Reidia singampattiana* deserves conservation. The floristic richness and endemism in this forest have been emphasized (Parthasarathy and Mahadevan, 1985).

Specimens examined : Type collection-isotype in BSI (MH) from Kakkachi, Tirunelveli District, Sebastine et Henry, 15-10-1957 ; Parthasarathy; 906, Kalakad R.F.—way to Naterikal 1,310 m, 22-8-84.

Distribution : Endemic to hills of Tirunelveli, Western Ghats, Tamil Nadu.

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A NOTE ON THE GENUS *OSTODES* (EUPHORBIACEAE)

The genus *Ostodes* was established by Blume in 1825 on the basis of a single species, *O. paniculata,* based on the type from Java. Since then, no less than 20 additional species have been attributed to the genus from time to time by different authors. To accommodate these varied assortment of species referred to the genus, Mueller (1866) even established two sections, viz. sect. *Euostodes* and sect. *Geloniastrum.* Thus the genus was considered to represent a polymorphic complex. Already in 1887, J. D. Hooker referred *Ostodes* as 'a heterogenous assemblage of trees and shrubs.' It was Airy Shaw (1967) who first studied and clarified the confusions and ambiguities which had centered around the genus. As per the circumscription established by him, the genus *Ostodes* is characterized by the absence of stellate hairs, the long-petioled glandular-dentate triplinerved leaves, the inflorescences being borne below the terminal tuft of leaves, free stamens with basally pilose filaments and the non-accrescent fruiting calyx. Consequently, Airy Shaw (1967) transferred most of the supposed species of *Ostodes* to other genera and recognized only 4 species, viz. *O. paniculata* Bl., *O. kerrii* Craib, *O. katherinae* Pax and *O. thyrsanthus* Pax. Again in 1972, Airy Shaw merged *O. kerrii* with *O. paniculata* and also referred *O. thyrsanthus* to it with a question mark.

Our critical studies on the genus *Ostodes* for Flora of India indicate that the boundaries between *O. paniculata, O. katherinae* and *O. thyrsanthus* are by no means clear and they appear to be often linked by transitions. Hence it seems appropriate and convenient to recognize *O. katherinae* and *O. thyrsanthus* only as varieties of *O. paniculata* Bl., as given below :

Ostodes paniculata Bl. Bijdr. 620. 1825 (sphalm : *paniculatus*). var. **katherinae** (Pax) T. Chakrab. & Balakr. comb. et stat. nov. *Ostodes katherinae* Pax, apud Pax & Hoffm. in Engler, Pflanzenr. IV. 147. iii : 19. 1911 ; Airy Shaw in Kew Bull. 20 : 411. 1967 & 26 : 311. 1972.

Tree, up to 10 m high, in dense evergreen forests between 1200 to 1700 m above m.s.l.

Distribution known so far : South West China (Yunnan) and Thailand.

Additional record : BURMA : Bhamo district, Kachin hills, Sinbum Kaba, 11 April 1912, *Lace* 5781 (CAL) ; East Katha district, Shwe-u-daung reserve, 1 May 1940, *Kermode* 16568 (DD).

Distinguishable from var. *paniculata* by its stronger pubescence, narrower male inflorescences and its larger male flowers with greater number of stamens.

var. **thyrsanthus** (Pax) T. Chakrab. & Balakr. comb. et stat. nov. *Ostodes thyrsanthus* Pax, apud Pax & Hoffm. in Engler, Pflanzenr. IV. 147. iii : 18. 1911 ; Airy Shaw in Kew Bull. 20 : 412. 1967.

Tree, up to 10 m high, at about 1500 m above m.s.l.

Distribution known so far : South West China (Yunnan) and Thailand (?).

Additional record : BURMA : Kyaukse, 24 June 1914, *Rodger* 179 (CAL).

Differs from var. *paniculata* in the stronger pubescence and narrower male inflorescences and from var. *katherinae* in the smaller male flowers and relatively fewer stamens.

The following key may be found useful in determining the three varieties :

1a. Inflorescences and flowers mostly glabrous or weakly pubescent ; male inflorescences broad, pyramidal-thyrsoid. .. *var. paniculata*
1b. Inflorescences and flowers tomentellose ; male inflorescences narrowly thyrsoid
  2a. Male flowers 11-15 mm diam. ; stamens 36-40. .. var. *katherinae*
  2b. Male flowers 3-6 mm diam. ; stamens 20-22. .. var. *thyrsanthus*

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